Comment Requested.

From: Joshua Powell <Josh@thepowellhousepress.com>
To: matt.murell@columbiacountyny.gov
Date: February 18, 2026 at 11:44 AM
Priority: High Importance

Dear Mr. Murell:

I received an email from a reader who shared a document — public, of course — of a map of 509 Bashford Road in the Town of Chatham. It shows clearly a DEC-identified wetland on property the county recently rezoned as Agriculture. As you are aware, any rezoning like this automatically triggers SEQR, which requires all local, regional, and state government agencies to equally examine the environmental impacts along with the social and economic considerations for a certain project, or action, during their discretionary review. I would like to understand the reasoning for the county to waive an environmental review.

According to the map — again, the one the Town of Chatham commissioned — not only is the property on a designated DEC wetland that is adjacent to more designated DEC wetlands, it also shows a land slope of or exceeding 15%, which is the threshold for concern around runoff — specifically pollution and erosion. The other issue here is "social and economic considerations" — exactly what feedback did the county get from the residents? As of now, there is a petition with over 100 signatures at the county, as well as many letters that have been submitted to the town against this project, that predate the county meeting allowing this change early this month. There is not a single document supporting this project. Furthermore, Donald Collins has been aware of this issue and its controversy. He was also absent from the meeting where the county Board of Supervisors voted on an issue specific to his community.

Josh Powell

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